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Protect Florida's Water Supply From Phosphate Mining

Support an Environmental Impact Statement for Phosphate Mining in Florida

[Download the Phosphate Mining packet today, click here](#) (MS Word Document)

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When you sign this petition, it will automatically generate an e-mail to all 14 individuals listed in the recipient section.



To:

U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Col. James G. May, District Engineer

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Stanley Meiburg, Acting Regional Administrator

Florida Department Environmental Protection, David B. Struhs, Secretary

Florida Governor Jeb Bush

Florida Representatives Dan Miller and Porter Goss

Florida Senators Bob Graham and Bill Nelson,

Charlotte County Legislators Jerry Paul, Lindsay Harrington, Jeff Kotthamp, Lisa Carlton, and Tom Rossin

Mr. Sonny Vergara, Executive Director SWFWMD

We, the undersigned, believe that phosphate mining in Florida poses a serious threat to the supply of freshwater necessary to sustain the health, economy, and environment of Central and South Florida. We further believe that the permanent loss of thousands of acres of natural wetlands and upland habitats is unacceptable, and that the phosphate industry's efforts to "mitigate" these losses have yet to prove that such resources can be effectively replaced with artificial systems. We also believe that the permanent alterations to the landscape caused by phosphate mining represent a long-term economic liability to Florida, and, in the case of the clay settling areas, a long-term health hazard, as well. Finally, we believe that no new or modified permits should be issued until the completion of a new, comprehensive, area-wide Environmental Impact Statement which takes into consideration the cumulative and secondary impacts of all existing, historic, proposed, or potential phosphate mining activities.

We, the undersigned, thank you for your time and careful consideration of this matter, and most respectfully urge you to encourage the US Environmental Protection Agency and US Army Corps of Engineers to develop a scientifically sound and complete Environmental Impact Statement upon which wise decisions concerning our vital natural resources can be based.

Sincerely,

[The Undersigned](#)

[Click Here to Sign Petition](#)

webmaster@charlottecountyfl.com

This site maintained by the Community Outreach Department, Charlotte County Board of Commissioners



10764222

Phosphate Mining Impacts on the Charlotte Harbor Watershed

The phosphate industry is proposing to add 100 square miles of new mines entirely within the Charlotte Harbor watershed, in the western portions of Hardee and DeSoto County. These mines have great potential to adversely impact the hydrology of the entire region, especially Horse Creek, the largest tributary of the Peace River. Freshwater from these streams are the lifeblood of Charlotte Harbor, the second largest and most productive estuary in Florida. Although required to do so by state and federal regulations, the permitting agencies have done little research to understand the secondary and cumulative impacts of past, existing, and proposed mines on our public water supplies, ecology, health and economy. As these agencies prepare to issue permits for new mines, Charlotte County remains unconvinced that the Peace River and Charlotte Harbor will be protected from these impacts and believes that the following concerns have not yet been adequately addressed:

1. Impacts to Public Water Supplies:

- a. Loss of Surface Water Resources - The Intermediate Aquifer, Horse Creek and the Peace River provide drinking water to over 150,000 citizens of Charlotte, Sarasota, and DeSoto counties. The average flow of the Peace River during the past 30 years is 37% less than the average flow of the river during the previous 30 years. The U.S. Geological Survey indicates that mining may be responsible for much of the lowered water tables and reduced flows in the Peace River. Charlotte County questions the logic of granting permission to a new mine proposing to take an additional average of 6.5 million gallons per day (up to 14 million gallons per day) directly out of the Peace River for corporate profits while past mining is partly responsible for area residents being on water restrictions.
- b. Contamination of Surface Waters - By redistributing phosphates, metals, salts, lead and radiological materials formerly contained in the phosphate matrix, mining activities degrade aquifer, stream, and estuary water quality. Increased levels of these materials have been linked to harmful algal blooms in fresh and saltwater bodies, agronomic and potable water quality problems, and serious health problems.
- c. Loss of Groundwater Storage - Proposed and future mines will create about eighty (80) square miles of waste clay areas, 80 to 100 feet thick. These waste clays are virtually impermeable and eliminate **two to three million gallons** of surficial aquifer water storage **per acre** that maintains ground water levels, recharges the aquifers and supplies potable water to over 150,000 residents.
- d. Contamination of Ground Water Supplies - Phosphate mining removes 20 to 50 feet of the semi-confining layer that separates the surficial aquifer from the intermediate aquifer, which is the backbone of the area's hydrology. Degradation of this confining layer increases the potential for water exchange between the aquifers and for one to pollute the other.

2. Impacts to Environmental Resources:

- a. Additional Loss of Important Wildlife Habitats: Proposed and future mines will directly and indirectly destroy many thousands of acres of valuable native uplands, wetlands, aquatic and marine habitats needed to maintain healthy wildlife populations throughout the basin.
- b. Alteration of Surface Hydrology - Mining operations and reclamation practices dramatically alter natural soils, topography and surface-drainage patterns of the area mined, which in turn, adversely impacts natural freshwater flows which are critical to maintaining valuable on-site wetlands, streams and the estuary.

3. Economic Impacts:

- a. Estuary Productivity - The berms and water control structures of operating mines, as well as the vastly different soils and contours of 'reclaimed' mines, alter the ground and surface water recharge and discharge characteristics of the area, which in turn, adversely impacts the natural timing of the flow of freshwater needed to maintain wetlands, rivers, and Charlotte Harbor, an estuary of national significance that is the economic cornerstone of Lee and Charlotte Counties that provides over \$3 billion per year to the local economies.
- b. Property values and jobs - Clay settling areas offer very limited post-mining development potential and are used primarily for low grade pastures which have very low property tax value and which lower adjacent land values, as well. Clay settling areas have already eliminated over 120,000 acres (over 187 square miles) of more productive native soils that would have generated more jobs, much higher property values, and economic benefits if the settling areas had not been created.
- c. Threat to Sustainability of US Food Production - The phosphate industry has projected that current mining levels (needed largely to meet **export** demands) will exhaust the country's highest grade, most available phosphate reserves in the next 30-40 years. Attempting to satisfy the global demand will accelerate depletion of these 'reserves', which will ultimately make U.S. farmers more (if not entirely) dependent upon foreign suppliers of fertilizer which will inevitably result in higher food prices to Americans.

4. Health Impacts:

- a. Human Health Impacts - Scientific studies have documented that sixty percent (60%) of the radioactivity associated with phosphate is concentrated in clays and sand tailings created by phosphate mining operations. These radiological materials can accumulate in plants, animals and humans. Studies have indicated that phosphate mining may be related to an increased risk of leukemia, lung cancer and colon cancer observed in Florida's mining regions. Many pollutants spread throughout the surficial aquifer are then transported throughout the basin, where they enter the food chains of many species, including humans.

1. Why is the County opposing the phosphate mining?

The County is opposing the phosphate mining at all levels available to us:

locally, by attending commission meetings of other counties to voice our concerns for the health, economic, and environmental concerns whenever our neighboring jurisdictions are considering actions which would affect the phosphate industry; we have managed to convince Lee, Sarasota, and Manatee counties to adopt resolutions supporting the areawide comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

regionally, at the Southwest Florida Water Management District (SWFWMD) and Regional Planning Council where the County has expressed its opposition, leading the RPC's adoption of a resolution supporting the areawide EIS; we are also encouraging the SWFWMD to purchase lands within the Peace River, Horse Creek, and Brushy Creek corridors through its Save Our Rivers Program

State: Charlotte County continues to petition the Florida Department of Environmental Protection on a variety of fronts:

1. Require the areawide EIS
2. Designate Horse creek an Outstanding Florida Water (OFW)
3. Purchase lands within the Peace River, Horse Creek, and Brushy Creek corridors through the Save Our Rivers Program (as with SWFWMD)
4. Require closer analysis of health, economic, and environmental issues still inadequately unaddressed in mine applications
5. Writing to state elected officials urging them to support the OFW designation and SOR requests

Federal: Charlotte County is working on multiple fronts here, as well:

1. Continues to petition both the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to:
 - A. Develop - or require the development of - the areawide EIS (each agency is pointing at the other as being the one who can require it!)
 - B. More closely analyze the health, economic, and environmental issues still inadequately addressed in the federal (Army Corps) application
2. Writing letters to elected officials urging them to support the areawide EIS, and to require the Federal regulatory agencies to adhere to the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act which requires that such an EIS be prepared

11. How citizens participate in the effort to require a comprehensive study as advocated by Charlotte County?

1. The best thing to do is let state, federal, and local elected policy makers know that the voters are deeply concerned about the immediate and long term effects of phosphate mining, including health (leukemia, cancer, etc), economic (permanent loss of tax base as lands left in waste category, no long term job creation), and environmental (diminished flows to public surface and groundwater supplies, threat of degradation to surface and groundwater quality, impacts to Charlotte Harbor Estuary, permanent massive loss of wildlife habitat). Engage in a letter writing campaign as individuals as well as a Civic Association. Attached is a sheet provides all the addresses you need.

2. Join additional civic or environmental organizations and volunteer time to help coordinate communication and other actions, or at least urge these organizations to become involved.

3. No matter how you do it, **GET INVOLVED.**

I.



CABINET MEMBERS (2002)

(4- Year Terni)

GOVERNOR

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

SECRETARY OF STATE

ATTORNEY GENERAL

COMPTROLLER

INSURANCE COMMISSIONER/TREASURER

COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION

COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE

JEB BUSH

FRANK BROGAN

KATHERINE HARRIS

BOB BUTTERWORTH

BOB MILLIGAN

TOM GALLAGHER

CHARLIE CRIST

BOB CRAWFORD

USSENATORS

(6-year tern)

(D) Bob Graham (2004)

2252 Killearn Center Blvd

3rd Floor

Tallahassee, FL 32308

524 Hart Senate Office Bldg

Washington, DC 20510

101 E Kennedy Blvd

Barnett Plaza, Ste 3270

Tampa, FL 33602

(D) Bill Nelson (2006)

818 Hart Senate Office Bldg

Washington, DC 20510

850-907-1100

(202) 224-3041

(813) 228-2476

(202) 224-5274

US CONGRESS (2002) (2-year term)

District 13

(R) Dan Miller

1751 Mound St, Ste 105

Sarasota, FL 34236

102 Cannon Use Office Bldg

Washington, DC 20510

(941) 951-6643

(202) 225-5015

*All of Sarasota, Manatee

Parts of Charlotte, Southern tip of Hillsborough

District 14

(R) Porter J. Goss

2000 Main St, Ste 303

Fort Myers, FL 33901

108 Cannon Use Office Bldg

Washington, DC 20515

(941) 332-4677

(202) 225-2536

*All of Lee, Collier, 75% of Charlotte

Sample Letter from Private Citizen

Your Return Address

The Honorable *(elected official to whom you're writing - remember to use "The Honorable")*
Representative's Address *(see list)*

Re: Area-Wide Environmental Impact Statement for Phosphate Mining in Florida

Dear *(Recipient's name)*:

As a citizen of the State of Florida, I am writing to you to let you know that I am deeply concerned over the economic, health, and environmental impacts associated with phosphate mining in Florida. Despite assurances from the industry that there will be no long term illeffects, this industry's high demand on our State's increasingly burdened freshwater-supply calls to question whether existing regulations adequately protect this vital resource. In addition, the long-term economic effects of the loss of arable or developable land to clay settling areas, lakes, and other mining by-products are understood little, if at all. Finally, this sort of mining results in the complete destruction of thousands of acres of wetlands and other essential wildlife habitats which are replaced with mitigation areas whose ability to support the species for which they were created is questionable at best.

Before any more mines are permitted, it is essential that the long term effects of this activity on water supplies, health, and the environment be clearly understood. Therefore, I respectfully urge you to support, through all means appropriate, the development of a comprehensive, area-wide Environmental Impact Statement for Phosphate Mining in Florida by the Army Corps of Engineers and Environmental Protection Agency.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this most important matter. The economy, ecology, and health of Florida depends on your support.

Sincerely,

Your name